Support PEC
Make a donation or get in touch with PEC at:
Post Office Box 460
Warrenton, VA 20188
540.347.2314 (general)
540.316.9972 (donations)
pec@pecva.org
or make a secure online donation at www.pecva.org.
Thank you for helping to protect the Piedmont!

Route 29 Improvements on Track in Charlottesville

In our last newsletter, we shared great news regarding the demise of the ill-conceived Western Bypass. As you might recall, a major blow to the project had been delivered back in February, when the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) announced serious reservations about the viability of the project. It made it clear that the necessary federal approvals were in doubt unless VDOT reordered the entire project, including a new review of alternatives.

Within a day of the FHWA statement, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors reinstated their opposition to the bypass and requested that VDOT fund several of the improvement projects recommended in the Places29 plan. Then, in early spring, Virginia Secretary of Transportation Aubrey Layne called on former VDOT commissioner Philip Shucet to convene a panel of stakeholders to discuss and reach a consensus on alternative projects to improve state, regional, and local traffic movement on Route 29.

After receiving the panel’s recommendations earlier this summer, the Commonwealth Transportation Board voted to remove all funds for the Western Bypass from VDOT’s current Six-Year Improvement Plan and to fully fund the proposed alternatives instead. VDOT received instructions to immediately begin all necessary planning, design, property acquisition and construction for the alternative improvements. Currently, the approximately $230 million package of alternatives includes:

- Route 29 Widening Project (Town Center Drive to Polo Grounds Road)
- Best Buy Ramp project (Route 29 and US 250 Interchange)
- Hilldale Drive Extended (Greenbrier Drive to Hydraulic Road)
- Adaptive Signal Time Improvements in the Route 29 Corridor (Airport Road to Hydraulic Road; signals at Angus Road/Route 29, Morton Drive/Emmet Street, and Hydraulic Road/Hilldale Drive are also included in the project)

From the current Six-Year Plan

New Projects

- Berkmar Drive Extended (Town Center Drive to Hilton Heights Road)
- Route 28/Rio Road Grade Separated Interchange
- Route 28/Hydraulic Road Grade Separated Interchange (Preliminary Engineering Only)
- Adding a second AMTRAK train between Lynchburg, Charlottesville, and Washington, D.C. daily.

Whoops!
You may have recently received our fall renewal letter. We’ve learned there was a mail house error, and the letter did not include a donation envelope. We apologize for any inconvenience. Please take advantage of the envelope provided in this Piedmont View!
Farmer-Chef Express

The website also has a section for surplus, seconds, and gleaning, giving farmers more ways to sell or donate excess or slightly blemished products. Gleaning is what happens when a farm opens its gates to a group of volunteers who harvest excess produce that would otherwise be left in the fields.

Volunteers harvest, pack, and deliver the donated produce to gleaning organizations, which in turn disperse the produce to area food banks and other groups. Gleaning groups, food banks, canneries, commercial kitchens—any organization with a use for less-than-perfect produce—are encouraged to search the site and even post products they are searching for.

“Though we opened up Farmer-Chef Express to our Buy Fresh Buy Local chapters first, anyone in Virginia, Maryland, District of Columbia, West Virginia or North Carolina are welcome to sign-up and participate,” says Palmer. A small food processor that sources local ingredients for use in products such as salsa, fruit syrup and BBQ sauces expressed excitement to PEC about the website. “We expect Farmer-Chef Express to be an efficient tool to locate seasonal produce for us to use in our products,” says Allie Hill, owner of Homegrown Virginia. “Before a production run, we are also eager to use Farmer-Chef Express to post our wanted ingredients, hoping to find locally-sourced options.”

Continued from cover

The Piedmont Environmental Council Fellowship: Shaping Tomorrow’s Leaders in Environmental Conservation” The author of the phrase is PEC’s creative Outreach Coordinator, Mary Liles.

Mary and PEC’s Director of Communications, Bri West, also wanted to bring the Fellows a new challenge this year. Along with the many topics the program covers such as conservation, urban planning, agriculture, historic preservation and public policy, the Fellowship includes a section on communications. Since social media is one of the most popular forms of communications now-a-days, we asked the fellows to create a Twitter account and tweet their experiences during their time with PEC.

Our Fellows dove right into the challenge, and we were impressed with the results. From beautiful pictures to educational tidbits to on-location reporting, they did a wonderful job of documenting their time and communicating to others what’s it’s like to be a PEC fellow. For inquiries or comments about the PEC Fellowship program, contact PEC Outreach Coordinator, Mary Liles, at mliles@pecva.org. (540) 347-2334 x19.
We are elated that the state is moving forward with a plan that no longer includes the Western Bypass. But there’s still work to be done before we cross the finish line.

VDOT still hasn’t announced plans for the approximately $40 million worth of right-of-way it acquired for the bypass. VDOT and state officials have publicly stated there is no transportation project for which the property is needed, but until VDOT sells those parcels, we remain wary of future efforts to resurrect the bypass.

Furthermore, while the CTB has removed and reallocated all funding for the bypass, the project will remain as a line item in VDOT’s 2040 Long-Range Transportation Plan and current Transportation Improvement Plan. This clerical step is reportedly necessary to allow “for the project’s resolution,” specifically the resale of the purchased right-of-way.

“Since the 1980s, PEC has researched and supported alternatives to the Western Bypass. We are excited that so many of those suggestions are being acted on and remain committed to full implementation,” said PEC President Chris Miller. PEC has never been alone in this fight. We are thankful for the community’s commitment and the effort of our partners, which include SELC, CATEC, ASAP, the Sierra Club and the League of Woman Voters.

We still have work ahead to ensure the improvements on Route 29 stay on track. Here’s what to do next:

- Be ready to attend upcoming VDOT location and design hearings on the various projects and express support for VDOT moving forward. For example, attend the October 14 public hearing.
- Press VDOT and Secretary Layne to sell the bypass right-of-way. It’s time to move forward with the new approved alternatives and to remove the specter of the bypass. They need to sell the right-of-way and direct those funds to much needed transportation improvements.
- Support the local business community, especially during those times when construction causes disruptions to traffic.
- Continue to voice your support for the package of alternatives and their timely implementation to the Board of Supervisors.
- Go to virginiadot.org/projects/route_29_feedback.asp and let Mr. Shucet and the Route 29 Advisory Panel know that you support the package of approved alternatives as an excellent opportunity for real cost-effective solutions for Route 29.
- Send a note to Governor McAuliffe and Secretary Layne to thank them for their leadership, action and commitment to real, cost-effective solutions for Route 29.

These are the projects we are supporting and providing updates on:

**Route 29 Improvements on Track in Charlottesville**

Route 29 Solutions Process Projects

**29 Solutions Process Projects**

- **Route 29 Bypass (Transition Process Only)**
  - Scope: Right-of-way purchased for 6.2 miles, 4-name bypass
  - Cost: $81,000,000
  - Estimated completion: 2017

- **US 29-Western Beltway**
  - Scope: Town Center Dr. to Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.
  - Cost: $64,000,000

- **US 29-Eastern Beltway**
  - Scope: Town Center Dr. to Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.
  - Cost: $30,000,000

- **US 29-Rio Road**
  - Scope: Ila Hogan Bridge Rd. to Rio Road
  - Cost: $8,000,000

- **US 29-Hydraulic Rd.**
  - Scope: Ila Hogan Bridge Rd. to Rio Road
  - Cost: $49,000,000

- **Seminole Trail Signals**
  - Scope: Airport Rd. to Hydraulic Rd.
  - Cost: $3,720,000

- **Seminole Trail Interchange**
  - Scope: Airport Rd. and US 29
  - Cost: $10,000,000

- **US 29/Hydraulic Grade**
  - Scope: Intersection at Southwood Rd. and US 29
  - Cost: $10,000,000

- **US 29/Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.**
  - Scope: Town Center Dr. to Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.
  - Cost: $8,000,000

- **US 29/Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.**
  - Scope: Town Center Dr. to Ila Hogan Bridge Rd.
  - Cost: $8,000,000

- **US 29/Hydraulic Rd.**
  - Scope: Ila Hogan Bridge Rd. to Rio Road
  - Cost: $8,000,000

**2: Berkmar Drive Extended**

- **Scope**: Town Center Dr. to Rio Rd.
- **Extent**: North/Airport Rd.
- **Cost**: $81,000,000

**3: Seminole Trail Signals**

- **Scope**: Airport Rd. to Hydraulic Rd.
- **Cost**: $3,720,000

**4: Route 29 Bypass (Transition Process Only)**

- **Scope**: Right-of-way purchased for 6.2 miles, 4-name bypass
- **Cost**: $81,000,000

**5: US 29-Rio Road**

- **Scope**: Ila Hogan Bridge Rd. to Rio Road
- **Cost**: $8,000,000

**6: US 29-Hydraulic Grade**

- **Scope**: Intersection at Southwood Rd. and US 29
- **Cost**: $10,000,000

**7: Hillsdale Dr Extended**

- **Scope**: Town Center Dr.
- **Cost**: $50,573,000

**8: Nottoway Rd Extended**

- **Scope**: Southbound from near SR 4 to SR 60 at SR 5
- **Cost**: $26,000,000

We are a complex challenge that requires careful consideration of many factors. It’s important to keep asking: What is the best use of the land? Is this the best use of the resources? Is this the best use of the environment? It’s time to move forward with the now approved alternatives and to remove the specter of the bypass. They need to sell the right-of-way and direct those funds to much needed transportation improvements.

Given that the traffic problems in Northern Virginia are largely east/west in nature, it’s important to keep asking: Who is this north/south bound Outer Beltway really for? Is it the best use of limited transportation funds? What are the impacts to existing and future residents of our region? Meanwhile, the Department of Interior is re-engaging on the environmental reviews for the Manassas Battlefield. Since a segment of the Battlefield bypass shares an alignment with the Bi-County Parkway, this environmental review could help pave the way for both roads. PEC believes that rescinding the national park with highways is not a good outcome for nearby residents or visitors to the National Park, and we continue to push for a solution that addresses the congestion of the area while best protecting this important historic resource.
Explore Warrenton Trails

Many residents in Fauquier County have heard of the Warrenton Branch Greenway Trail, but did you know that Warrenton has many other trail options? Check out this map to see the existing and proposed trails. Run, walk, bike and take in the beautiful scenery. PEC is working on improving access to trails throughout the Piedmont region, with partners such as Fauquier Trails Coalition. Visit pecva.org/faquier to see additional trail maps in other service districts throughout Fauquier County.

Pop Quiz

How many total miles of scenic byway are located within PEC’s nine-county working region?

a) 389 miles  
b) 604 miles  
c) 720 miles

ANSWER

c) 720 miles

The scenic byways in Virginia’s Piedmont region travel through beautiful landscapes, allowing people to enjoy picturesque scenery and visit historically significant locations along the way.

This is Big!

By Chris Miller, PEC President

The opening of the Silver Line this past July was an important step toward a better future for the Washington metropolitan region and the Commonwealth of Virginia. For decades, Tysons has been an example of 20th century development, urban and suburban areas that don’t quite work—too many cars, no sidewalks and not enough green space.

The investment in the Silver Line presents us with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to improve travel and commutes, restore air and water quality, enhance our ability to preserve the rural economy and ultimately, transform the quality of life in communities along the new Metro line and in the region as a whole.

Some of the immediate benefits are an increase in transit commuters, improved access to jobs, a boost to the economy (with increased access to local businesses) and improved air and water quality.

As with any major change of this scale, plenty of opportunities and challenges remain, such as funding the second phase to Dulles Airport and Loudoun County; making sure the promised investments in local roads, local transit, and sidewalks are made in a timely fashion; implementing the commitments on new and improved stormwater systems; and constantly working to improve the mix of uses and amenities in the new and redeveloped communities in Tysons, Reston and Loudoun. As we recommended during the debate about the design of the Silver Line, the Metro system needs an additional crossing from Virginia to the District to ensure that all lines, particularly the Blue Line, can operate at maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

But the fact remains that the region’s future is far better with the opening of the Silver Line than with any other investment in the past 40 years. It will make possible a pattern of future development that provides transportation options and the opportunity to redevelop and improve the region. Let’s take time to celebrate this amazing accomplishment.

Submit Your Images To PEC’s 5th Annual Photo Contest!

What makes PEC’s photo contest special is the beautiful and interesting photos that come from our Piedmont region. Categories range from “landscapes” to “native plants and wildlife” to “local farms and food.” We’ve also included a new youth category for ages 17 and under.

Each of the finalists will receive a free PEC membership and have his/her work featured in upcoming PEC publications. The winners of each category will receive a $75 gift certificate to a nearby Buy Fresh Buy Local restaurant!

Be sure to enter your photos by September 17 for a chance to win! Go to www.pecva.org/photocontest for submission details. If you have questions, please contact Paula Combs, Senior Editor and PR Manager, at pcombs@pecva.org or (540) 347-2334 ext. 17.
Food for Thought

This summer we kicked off Food for Thought: A local food and farm speaker series, which showcased farms and food businesses close to downtown Culpeper. The events address topics such as the challenges of farming, the innovations made by a new generation of farmers and the important role of consumers in sustaining local food-based businesses.

During the series, James and Holly Hammond of Whisper Hill Farm shared their story of creating a successful farm business growing produce and flowers on just a few acres, followed by a discussion by Brightwood Vineyard and Farm’s Dean and Susan Vidal on the hidden value of eating local. The Vidal’s takeaway message, that by purchasing locally you not only receive a delicious product, but you are also supporting the growth of locally owned businesses, seemed to resonate throughout all of the discussions.

Jeffery Mitchell, owner of Culpeper Cheese Company, also spoke at an event about the challenges of making cheese in a region where dairies are scarce. He also described his interest in establishing a “cheese cave” in Culpeper, which would involve the storage of a large volume of cheeses from the Piedmont region.

Another speaker, Caroline Mello of Caroline’s Specialty Foods, gave a presentation on ways to prolong the shelf life of those tasty local berries and other goodies growing in the garden. Caroline provided the basics of home canning, and she shared her specialty jams made with unusual flavors. She buys many of her raw materials locally from orchards, and she grows her own tomatoes.

These events aim to deepen the discussion about the intricacies of supporting and promoting our local food system. Strengthening our region’s awareness and involvement in supporting agriculture is key to having a viable and profitable local food economy.

PEC continues to work on connecting consumers to farms through events like the Food for Thought series; distributing the Buy Fresh Buy Local publication; the online, interactive tool Farmer-Chef Express website (see cover page); and ultimately ensuring that arable land is available in the future for agricultural endeavors through land conservation and land-use planning.

Top Social Media Posts from this Summer!

We’ve found that social media tools like Facebook are increasingly important for getting out our message. They give us an opportunity to educate our members, quickly share news, connect with other organizations and help tell our story. And as with any form of communication, effective social media posts require thought, planning and a detailed understanding of how to reach the audience.

Our best posts generally have a simple message and a positive takeaway connected to a visually appealing image. When we have information that we want people to know about, we take an extra step and spend $20 or less to “promote” the post. This increases the number of views, whether that be from our members or new audiences.

For example, one of our most recent promoted posts was about the Metro’s new Silver Line opening. We “reached” 4,314 people (meaning, thousands viewed the post), and 94 people ‘liked’ it. Another popular post we did was about the Food for Thought speaker series, which reached 4,412 people. Of those people, 76 “liked” it and 33 people “shared” the post—effectively spreading our message to a broader audience at a very low cost.

The meadow at the Piedmont Memorial Overlook is in full bloom! The fields are exploding with black-eyed and brown-eyed susans, partridge pea, one-eye daisy and butterfly weed. Many different species of bees and butterflies are taking full advantage of this first year meadow’s abundant blooms. We will continue to spot treat some invasive plants like lespedeza and perilla mint, but our meadow restoration project is well on its way! This fall we will also be prepping the pine restoration area, which will be planted in the spring.

The project is one of several pilots that PEC is conducting to develop practical recommendations for landowners interested in habitat restoration. You can visit by hiking the Appalachian National Scenic Trail Ambassador Whitehouse Loop, accessible from Sky Meadow State Park!

The Sustainable Habitat Program is looking for landowners in the Thumb Run watershed that are interested in participating in our Backyard Habitat Cost-Share program. Participants will be provided with a habitat garden design, a suite of native plants from Hill House Farm & Nursery, and on-the-ground management advice from PEC Habitat staff.

There is no acreage requirement for this project. If you are interested in learning more about this pilot effort, contact Celia Vuocolo, PEC’s Sustainable Habitat Program Assistant, at cvuocolo@pecva.org or 540-347-2334 ext. 25.
ALBEMARLE

Comprehensive Plan Still in the Works

Over the next several months, the Albemarle Board of Supervisors will continue to review proposed revisions to the county’s Comprehensive Plan, with a public hearing and final adoption expected sometime early 2015. The Comprehensive Plan is the county’s planning guide for issues including land use, development, rural preservation, natural and historic resource protection, economic development, and transportation.

The Rural Area chapter review is completed, and it will continue Albemarle’s long held commitment to rural preservation. In September and October, the Board of Supervisors will review the Growth Area and Transportation chapters. Public input will continue to be critical. Contact Jeff Werner for more information at jeffw@pecva.org or 434-977-2033, ext 29. The draft revisions are posted on the county’s web page at albemarle.org under Comprehensive Plan Update.

CLARKE

Improving Habitats

PEC continues to work with volunteers to monitor water quality at four sites in the Spout Run watershed. Over time, the results will show whether ecological conditions are improving, staying the same or deteriorating. In the fall, we will work with the County on riparian tree plantings to increase streamside vegetation. This will help to improve the ecology of the stream by creating better habitat conditions, with the ultimate goal of making Spout Run a healthier stream and benefiting people and animals in the watershed.

CULPEPER

County Reviews Comprehensive Plan

Culpeper County is reviewing its Comprehensive Plan, starting with an update of its demographics chapter. Numerous other sections are also slated for review in the coming months. PEC will be following the Planning Commission’s discussions and preparing comments where appropriate.

FAQUINER

Comprehensive Plan Redrafting and New Proposed Cell Towers

Fauquier County is redrafting the telecommunication section and the environmental and cultural resources sections of the Comprehensive Plan. These two chapters have a huge impact on the work that PEC does in protecting scenic, historic and environmental resources of the County. To see the Comprehensive Plan amendments being proposed, please visit pecva.org/our-region/fauquier.

Additionally, new cell towers are being proposed throughout the County, which may bring better service into more remote rural areas, but could also bring an intrusive industrial type use into areas valued for their picturesque landscapes. Currently, a 154-foot monopole is being proposed just outside of the village of Casanova. We are concerned that the height and design of this proposal are inappropriate for the site selected, and it will have an impact on tourism, property values and enjoyment of the outdoors in the Casanova community. There are technological alternatives to taller towers, as well as less intrusive locations for an antenna.

GREENE

Upzoning Commercial Properties

Several property owners in the Ruckersville area have applied in the past year to upzone their commercial properties. One declined to say whether they will eventually build something that conforms to Greene’s mixed-use, multimodal vision for its growth areas. Another presented a concept that offers more of the same sprawl development that has previously failed in the Route 29 corridor. We are encouraging Greene’s leaders to hold to their vision and not be swayed by the uncertain promise of commercial tax revenue.

LOUDOUN

Costs of Growth

The current Loudoun County Board of Supervisors has only approved a small number of new residential units, appearing to finally recognize the true costs associated with this sort of development—in particular, the need for schools and other public facilities. This year, PEC contributed to that general understanding by commissioning a fiscal review of a proposed residential rezoning. This past July, the Loudoun County Planning Commission approved the commission permit for a proposed water tower to be built on the south side of Red Hill Road at Stone School Lane. The Planning Commission also recommended that the Board of Supervisors approve the special exception with conditions. The Board held their hearing on Sep. 10, and you can learn about the outcome of the meeting by visiting www.loudoun.gov. PEC is recommending a denial of the commission permit because it’s clear from the adopted policy of the County that the uses established within the Transition Policy Area are to be distinctive in design from the uses located within the Suburban Policy to the east. We’re also recommending denial of the special exception because it doesn’t conform to the policies and guidelines contained with the Revised General Plan.

MADISON

Get Involved

In the spring, Madison County has initiated a rural and tourism based economic development strategy aimed at promoting local agriculture and its many access points to trails in Shenandoah National Park and the Rapidan Wildlife Area. The County is facilitating broad stakeholder input by organizing several different working groups that are meeting regularly throughout the end of the year. To learn more or get involved in a working group, contact Ernie Hoch at 540.948.7500 ext. 100.

ORANGE

Boys & Girls Club and Rt. 3 Plan

A partnership between PEC and The Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Virginia has created new opportunities for Orange County youth to experience the natural environment and history of the surrounding region. Recent activities have included picking blueberries at a local farm, paddling the Rapidan River, and hiking along the Appalachian Trail. Future trips to local farms this fall will involve picking apples and learning about raising turkeys.

Orange County is moving forward with the Small Area Plan for the Rt. 3 growth area. Some of the details of the plan are still unclear, and what we know is not good. The plan includes a renewed call for the realignment of Rt. 20 through the Wilderness Battlefield and the straightening and widening of Flat Run Rd (Rt. 601). The plan also calls for 6 million gallons per day of future water use—greater than 5 times the current use.

From Native Grasslands Management to Exploring the Bruce Jones Nature Preserve

On Loock, Agricultural and Rural Economy Program Manager, and a small group traveled to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in July to learn more about native warm season grass management. The group visited The Center for Native Grasslands Management, where they heard expert Dr. Patrick Keyser speak. They also visited several research sites around Knoxville. Knowledge from the trip will be used to augment management efforts in the county, including at Over Jordan Farm in Rappahannock as part of a Conservation Innovation Grant project supported by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Bruce Jones talks about native plants on his property during the Pollinator Walk.

Cela Vuoccolo, Sustainable Habitat Program Assistant, led a very popular Pollinator Walk at the Bruce Jones Nature Preserve with Jennifer Davis of Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute and Virginia Working Landscapes on August 16. The walk focused on using native plants as a food source for pollinators, how to increase pollinator habitat, and the restoration work that Bruce Jones has achieved on his property during the Pollinator Walk.
**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Drink a Pint to Support Clean Water**  
**WHEN:** Friday, September 19, 4 – 7 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Old Bust Head Brewery  
Whether you care about clean water because you drink it, use it to swim or fish in, or as the #1 ingredient in your favorite beer, join us to help protect streams and wetlands in Fauquier. Half of all the sales from their pints will benefit PEC and Green Leap Forward Fund. The event is sponsored by Choose Clean Water Coalition and Natural Resources Defense Council.

**Remington Fall Festival**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 11  
**WHERE:** Fireman’s Carnival Grounds behind M.M. Pierce Elementary School, 12074 James Madison Street, Remington  
Each October, the streets of Remington’s quaint downtown fill with day-long family-friendly entertainment. The event will include tabling by local organizations, craft vendors, live music, a car show, and lots of food options. Proceeds benefit the Remington Volunteer Fire & Rescue. For more information, call (540) 439-0754.

**Fauquier Farm Tour**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 11, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.  
**WHERE:** North-Western Fauquier  
This year’s award-winning farm tour will be held in north-western Fauquier County. Visit any or all of the farms on the tour and enjoy animal exhibits, interpretive tours, demonstrations, farm machinery, and hayrides! For more information, call Ray Pickering at (540) 422-8280. For a map of farms, visit www.fauquier.org.

**Feast From The Field**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 11, 5 – 8 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Fauquier Education Farm/Moriah Farm  
Enjoy a fall celebration of locally grown food and wine while listening to Appalachian Old Time Mountain music by The Cabin Raiders. All proceeds benefit the Fauquier Education Farm. For more information, contact Karen Hunsberger by phone at (540) 316-9972 or by email at khunsberger@pecva.org.

**Clarke Conservation Fair**  
**WHEN:** Thursday, October 16  
**WHERE:** Powhatan School, Millwood  
The Fair takes place at Powhatan school for both Powhatan and Clarke County students, and it teaches them about habitat conservation. Students rotate through several stations, followed by lunch and a group presentation. PEC facilitates and coordinates the event.

**Family Stream Day**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 18, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Lyndora Park, Ashburn, VA  
Join PEC, other non-profits and County agencies for an educational and fun look at keeping Loudoun’s streams healthy and conserving water. For questions, contact Gem Bingol at gbingol@pecva.org.

**Great Pumpkin Ride and Celebrate Trails! Festival**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 25 (rain or shine)  
**WHERE:** Warrenton Branch Greenway trail: 100 4th Street, Warrenton, VA  
The Great Pumpkin Ride is a bicycle ride with route options of 24, 46, and 66 miles. PEC is supporting this event, which is sponsored by Fauquier Trails Coalition. Proceeds will go to the construction of new trails throughout Fauquier County. For more information, visit www.FauquierTrails.com. Early registration required. Following this event, the Celebrate Trails! Festival will begin at 12 p.m., and it goes until 4 p.m. at the corner of 5th Street and Franklin Street.

**Loudoun Canoe Trip—Paddle the Potomac**  
**WHEN:** Saturday, October 11 (rain date October 12), 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
**WHERE:** Algenkian Regional Park Boat Launch  
Join PEC and River and Trail Outfitters for a fun and informative trip on our mighty northern border. We will go up and downstream to see where our major eastern Loudoun streams flow into the Potomac. The cost is $30. For questions, contact Gem Bingol at gbingol@pecva.org.
One of the important characteristics of PEC is that we are relevant. Our mission, our programs, our actions, and our words are taken seriously, both within our communities and by the outside world. And even though PEC gets the most attention for our stances in opposition to questionable or poorly conceived projects such as the Dominion Transmission Line project or the Charlottesville Western Bypass, the reality is that the bulk of our work is proactive and positive in nature, and it matters.

Comprehensive planning and zoning matter. We have worked for more than 40 years to try to plan for a better future, including encouraging redevelopment of historic towns and villages, limiting the impact of industrial infrastructure on scenic byways and in historic districts, and planning for conservation of agricultural soils and natural resources. It makes a difference—people come in growing numbers to visit this landscape and appreciate our efforts.

Conservation easements matter. Each property that is protected adds to a diverse matrix of important conservation lands. With more than 370,000 acres under easement in the region, leaders at the local, state and national levels are recognizing the impact of protecting a broad landscape for farming, forestry, habitat, tourism, recreation, and water quality. Over the span of a generation, we have preserved one of the key inputs—land—that makes our local economy work and will keep our traditional industries strong for future generations.

Investments in infrastructure—where it is located, and how it is designed—matter. The Route 50 traffic calming project, the Blueprint for a Better Region, and PEC’s longstanding efforts to support alternatives to building the Charlottesville Western Bypass represent a growing body of work by PEC to improve transportation planning and design. Our battle over the years to implement constructive alternatives to traditional highway expansion projects has resulted in tangible results that reduce traffic congestion, enable better land use decisions, and protect natural and cultural resources.

Availability and access to locally produced food matters. Increasing access to local food helps to sustain our local agricultural economy by providing new and expanding markets for local farmers. It also brings us closer as a community when local residents connect with their farm neighbors at markets, farm stands, local stores, and through restaurants. And, when we know that our food is produced locally, we’re all more interested in protecting the land, water and economic system that makes that local food grow.

Restoring habitat matters. The Piedmont is a critical corridor for many species who travel in and out, north and south, or throughout our region. By creating and improving wildlife habitat in the region, we’re making our lands more resilient to climate change and more functional for the wildlife who rely on it. Moreover, we’re increasing the beauty of the region—helping to attract tourists and recreationalists from across the nation to hike, bird watch in our mountains, and fish in our rivers.

Making an impact every day matters. One small example of making an impact is the PEC Fellowship program. On the last day of the program, the participants presented projects on topics ranging from land use policy to watershed health to communications, and more. These presentations were delivered in a creative and professional manner by 12 bright, motivated young adults. I am proud that we have a Fellows program that gives young people an insight into the reality of conservation and protection of natural and cultural resources.

Sincerely,

Chris Miller, President